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## **Judge Orders Former San Diego TV Repair Shop Owner to Pay Nearly \$43,000 in Restitution to Consumer Victims**

SAN DIEGO – After serving a year in jail for defrauding consumers, John Joseph “Vinny” Johnson, former operator of Big Screen TV in San Diego, has been ordered to repay victims \$42,781.92 in restitution to consumers.

San Diego Superior Court Judge Frank A. Brown, during a Jan. 29 hearing, released Johnson from custody, placed him on probation and into a work furlough program, and ordered him to make monthly restitution payments of \$500 or more.

The judge indicated that he would consider at a scheduled April 26 probation hearing early release of Johnson from the work furlough program, if he successfully participates in the program. The judge also indicated that at that hearing he would likely order Johnson to pay increased monthly restitution payments of \$1,000.

Johnson has agreed to surrender his California electronic repair dealer registration.

He pleaded guilty early last year to ten criminal counts that included grand theft, forgery, fraud, false advertising, making misleading statements and failure to pay sales taxes. The conviction resulted from an investigation by the California Department of Consumer Affairs’ Bureau of Electronic and Appliance Repair (BEAR) and prosecution by the San Diego City Attorney’s Office.

Consumer complaints to BEAR and the San Diego City Attorney's Consumer and Environmental Protection Unit led to a joint investigation, including an undercover sting operation involving state investigators posing as consumers seeking electronic repairs.

More than 100 customers came forward to assist officials with the investigation. More than 190 TVs and VCRs valued at over \$80,000 were seized.

California law prohibits fraud or dishonest dealing by electronic and appliance repair dealers. Dealers are required to take certain consumer-assurance steps, including providing a written estimate for the total cost and returning most replaced parts.

Consumers with questions about the repair of home electronic equipment or major appliances should contact BEAR at (916) 574-2069 or online at [www.bear.ca.gov](http://www.bear.ca.gov).

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